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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the document is to (1) define the meaning of development education in a United States context, (2) describe formal and nonformal development activities in the United States, and (3) suggest steps that could be taken in the future to promote development education efforts in the United Staes. Development education is seen as both process and content, encompassing programs that: transfer factual information about developing countries and people as well as about global social, economic, and political structures and problems; foster understanding of development as a process that involves all nations; create a broad global consciousness; promote values and attitudes to encourage responsibility to correct injustices; and engage citizens in action and advocacy to improve the quality of life for all people. A brief overview describes development education programs undertaken by: research, education, and action organizations with a United State focus; private and voluntary field-oriented organizations; churches; schools and universities; student exchange and volunteer programs. Among the activities suggested to promote development education activities are: developing communications networks among educating organizations; establishing a national, annual development education "event"; promoting statewide councils; publicizing linkages between U.S. and world poverty and development; and engaging Americans more directly with the poor. (NEC)

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Development Education
Paper No. 14

DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES[1]

by

Jayne Millar-Wood[2]

1981

Development education in a U.S. context has many meanings, few shared assumptions and has, over the years, taken a variety of forms. This diversity is accompanied by a general lack of both funds and coordination of activities at the local, state and national levels. Despite these obstacles, however, development education in the last five, perhaps ten, years has begun to take root in some local and national organizations. While there is not a groundswell of support for expanding development education programs, there is clearly a growing awareness of and interest in issues and problems related to developing countries.

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[1]The term "development education" in all cases in this article is used to refer to educational programs in the U.S. which seek to inform, motivate and/or involve U.S. citizens in programs about developing countries or the development process, primarily in Asia, Africa and Latin America. It does not refer to education projects in the Third World supported by Americans or others.

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During the last decade, Americans have been intermittently bombarded by media coverage of events in developing countries which have had a direct or indirect impact not only on U.S. national policy but also on individual American citizens. Rising oil prices, world food shortages, acts of terrorism, natural disasters and frequent political upheavals have served to define the images of developing countries for a majority of American citizens. Many of these images are unfortunately limited and negative. But they have, at least, awakened many people to the existing and potential interconnections between 5% of the world's population living in the U.S. and 75% of its population living in developing countries.

Though Americans have not had the same history of colonialism as some European nations which has provided a raison d'etre for development education in those countries, they now are beginning to perceive the economic interdependence between the U.S. and the Third World and, at least on the basis of "self interest," are willing to learn, and perhaps do, something about development.

The purpose of this article is to (1) define the meaning of "development education" in a U.S. context, (2) describe some of the formal and nonformal development activities in the U.S., and (3) suggest some steps that could be taken in the future to promote development education efforts in the U.S.

Defining "Development Education" in a U.S. Context

In the U.S., the term "development education" has many interpretations and covers a broad spectrum of activities. Its meaning varies according to different ideological and theoretical assumptions underlying the terms "development" and "education." It is sometimes misunderstood by educators who think of "development" first in terms of the evolution of a child's personality, rather than in terms of issues relating to the Third World.

Many people do not like, and therefore will not use, the term "development education" as they believe it too often emphasizes economic growth and pays too little attention to the total context--political, socio-cultural and economic--of countries in the Third World. They feel that development education sets up a "we-they" dichotomy by subtly implying that the U.S. has already "developed" and that other countries

are merely "catching up." Presently, the term "global education" or "global perspectives in education" seems to be gaining more acceptance and for many people encompasses those programs that otherwise would be called "development education" in, for example, a European or Canadian context.

In terms of substantive or topical focus, world hunger is the most common starting point for exploring development issues as it is most familiar to Americans. Other issues such as population, the environment, poverty, ecological balance and disarmament are used as "windows" through which to study development. Cross-cultural studies (i.e., studies about other cultures, their similarities and differences with the U.S.) are also perceived as a form of development education. Development education programs include a limited examination of structural inequalities, e.g., in the case of the international economic system, and also some concern about justice and equity in an unjust world. But for the most part, development education programs concentrate on transferring factual, descriptive information about developing countries and/or their linkages to the U.S., not on the broader North/South issues of structural injustice.

To define development education in a U.S. context is to invite controversy. It is like 5 blind persons touching different parts of an elephant and trying to describe the whole creature. Development education is many things to many people. For the purpose of this article, development education is both process and content and encompasses programs that:

- o transfer factual information about developing countries and people in Asia, Africa and Latin America as well as about global social, economic and political structures and problems;
- o foster understanding of development as a process that involves all nations;
- o create a broad global consciousness and an awareness of transnational problems;
- o promote values and attitudes which will encourage a feeling of responsibility to correct injustices;
- o engage citizens in various action and advocacy activities that will promote justice, equity, and dignity and will lead to an improvement in the quality of life for all people, especially in the Third World.

What's Happening?

Within these broad parameters of development education there are a number of short- and long-term activities and programs which promote, in one way or another, a better understanding of developing countries, of people in these countries and of issues related to global development. These programs are undertaken almost entirely by hundreds of private (non-governmental) voluntary, non-profit organizations (NGOs). For some of these NGOs development is a primary focus; for others, it is a periphery issue. Collectively these programs constitute whatever development education movement there is in the U.S. today. As noted above, these activities vary widely in substantive focus, scope, intensity and duration. For the most part they are small-scale and localized.

The forms development education takes range from the passive, straightforward presentation of facts on the geography, history and culture of developing countries in a formal classroom setting to the active involvement of citizens in the U.S. in political and economic campaigns (e.g., boycotts) on behalf of poor people both in the U.S. and in developing countries. They involve citizens of all ages in small seminars and large conferences, lobbying of elected public officials and appointed policymakers, fund-raising efforts, community "fairs", local poverty projects, "walks" for development and overseas exchanges and study tours.

As always, the supply and demand for funds are out of balance. Also, with the proliferation of internationally oriented organizations, the pie is being divided into much smaller pieces. Despite the major role the U.S. plays in world affairs, potential funding sources, including the national government, have been unwilling or unable to provide the resources necessary to educate the public.

Support for such programs in the U.S. comes from private foundations, organizations and corporations, local community sources, individual donors, etc. Some government agencies such as the Departments of Education and State make limited funds available for research and citizen education programs. But the national government is constrained by legislation from using public funds for any purpose which might be construed as "lobbying" for its programs. Unlike Canada or Sweden, the U.S. Agency for International Development does not underwrite development education programs in the U.S.

There are other obstacles as well to the expansion of a development education movement. The U.S. is a very large country with over 220 million people scattered about 50 non-contiguous states. There are also a large number of internationally oriented public and private institutions and organizations at both local and national levels concerned with education and/or development who often compete for the time and attention of the same audiences. Moreover, strong traditions of local control militate against national coordination. Finally, varying assumptions about development and education often divide rather than unify natural allies in the movement. As a consequence, a development education movement has not gained much momentum as yet.

A brief overview of "what's happening" is presented in the following paragraphs. The listing is exemplary, not exhaustive. Recognizing that organizational purposes and programs do overlap, discussion of these activities has nevertheless been organized under five broad "functional" categories of organizations that undertake development education programs. These are:

- Research, Education and Action Organizations-- U.S. focus
- private and voluntary field-oriented organizations (PVOs)
- churches
- schools and universities
- student exchange and volunteer programs.

Research, Education and Action Organizations-- U.S. Focus

There are more than 100 non-governmental research, education and action groups whose primary agenda is to inform and/or involve Americans in one or more global problems or issues related to development and/or developing countries. Their substantive focus and action strategies vary widely. Some have a particular topical focus such as the Institute for Food and Development Policy, World Hunger Education Service, Population Reference Bureau or the China Council. Others, like the Overseas Development Council and

the Institute for Policy Studies do research and public education on a variety of North/South issues (energy, food, trade, transnational corporations, debt, etc.) from a public policy perspective. Some, like New Directions, Bread for the World and the Interreligious Task Force on U.S. Food Policy tie their education programs to political advocacy (lobbying) efforts. Others, like the Hunger Project, direct their efforts almost wholly to "consciousness raising" through conferences and media events. Still others, like Infant Formula Action Together (INFACT), have sought to mobilize the American public around an economic boycott.

There are also a number of membership organizations whose primary focus is not development or even international education, but which include development issues on their programmatic agenda on a regular basis and, in fact, reach out to large constituencies through local "chapter" meetings, annual conferences, etc. These organizations include, for example, the League of Women Voters (who have undertaken a large international trade project), the American Association of University Women (which has focused on world food issues), local World Affairs Councils which sponsor programs on various development issues, and the YMCA which has made North/South issues an important focus of their international program.

There have been some efforts made to encourage cooperative programming among some of these groups at the local and regional level. Beginning in 1977, a series of 6 major conferences have been held in different corners of the continental U.S. on the general theme of "the U.S. in a changing world economy." These multi-sectoral conferences, involving anywhere from 500 to 1,000 people each, have consciously sought to involve citizens representing a variety of economic, social and political interests and organizations, including churches, labor and business groups, service, women and minority organizations and educators. The conferences, organized by local citizen leaders with some assistance from the U.N. Non-Governmental Liaison Service and other U.S. national groups like the YMCA, have resulted in some cooperation among various regional groups both in the pre-planning stages and in follow-up education activities. While these conferences could provide an initial base for national development education efforts (such as the "development-weeks" held in some other industrial countries), such a nationally coordinated effort has not yet been undertaken.

Schools and Universities

American public schools from kindergarten through senior high have traditionally paid very little attention to development education per se though there has been a growing awareness of the importance of teaching about other cultures, global problems, etc. What passes for development education is most likely to be found at the junior/senior high level in such courses as "Current Events" or "World Problems", "Area Studies" (e.g., study of a region such as Asia), "World History" or "Geography."

In Area Studies, for example, much is taught about the culture and history of countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and, more recently, the Middle East. But much of the content, particularly at the pre-college level, still focuses on "exotic" cultural traits and avoids an in-depth examination of political and economic situations. Regardless of the area, usually only a few "big name" countries in a region are covered by case studies in either texts or collateral materials. In Asia, these include China, Japan and India; in Africa, Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa; in Latin America, Brazil, Mexico and Chile; and in the Middle East, Egypt and Israel. Other countries and people in these regions are largely ignored.

In "World Problems" courses, population studies and hunger education have become standard topics. A 1977 study indicated, for example, that 40% or more of science and social studies teachers at the high school level teach about population, though the content varies from course to course. Hunger education, which includes content about the dimensions and causes of world hunger, often focuses on the disasters and not on the potential to eliminate hunger. Fortunately, numerous new education materials, including simulation games, lesson plans and filmstrips have been produced in the last 5 years to help teach about world hunger and population in schools.

In the elementary school, students begin by studying about people and communities. These studies may or may not have an international, let along development, dimension. At least once or twice before going to high school, students will likely get another exposure to international issues (possibly relating to developing countries) in social studies or geography. A majority of elementary schools are involved in some way with UNICEF's programs. While many materials at the elementary level are still quite ethnocentric in approach, there seems to be movement away from equating "cultural days" with development education. Also, many primary grade curricula deal with human needs issues and a few teachers are

beginning to tie these lessons to the needs of people in developing countries.

In any event, the integration of development education content and concepts into U.S. school curricula will continue to be difficult for several reasons. These include:

- o a high degree of decentralization and autonomy in the public schools making it difficult to legislate curricula;
- o inadequate attention to development and developing countries, etc., in textbooks;
- o unprepared teachers, most of whom have had no international training or experience;
- o inflexible curricula requirements that reduce time for "new" subjects; and
- o a tendency to avoid controversial political and economic issues which challenge long-held assumptions.

In sum, development education in the schools faces an uphill battle in terms of displacing other priorities and gaining the attention and support not only of teachers but of administrators and parents as well.

Despite these obstacles, there have been some positive changes in recent years. Some new curricula materials have focused attention on a broad range of interdependence issues, global problems and justice concerns. For example, a number of states and communities have published materials around the theme of "Your State-In-The-World", an approach that seeks to identify all of the linkages a particular community has with other parts of the world, particularly with the developing countries, in terms of trade, foreign residents, church connections, etc. While increasingly available, these materials have not been widely adopted, nor are they generally integrated in a systematic way into the curricula. But they are an important trend.

At the university level, teaching about development again varies from campus to campus. Some universities have extensive curricula on all aspects of development; others emphasize studies of a particular aspect such as agricultural development, African or population studies. Generally, unless a student is seeking a degree in a field associated with some aspect of development, he/she could complete four years of higher education and never be exposed to concepts or factual data relating to one or more aspects of development or developing countries. The same is true for teacher

training programs, most of which do not include a global dimension.

International Exchange and Volunteer Program

There are a number of private international exchange and volunteer programs, both short- and long-term, in the U.S., which provide meaningful, first-hand experiences for Americans in developing countries. These include American Field Service International/Intercultural Programs, Youth for Understanding, the Experiment in International Living, Sister Cities International, Partners of the Americas, International Voluntary Service, etc. The number of Americans each of these organizations sends abroad annually ranges from 500 to 3,500. All of these programs send some percentages of people to developing countries, though most of their programs are concentrated in industrialized countries.

In addition to participants in private exchange programs, more than 75,000 Americans have been Peace Corps volunteers in developing countries. Some of them who have had first-hand experiences in the Third World have remained active in educating the public about development in their present roles as teachers, businesspersons, etc. Many are good resource persons for development education programs.

Unfortunately, the energies and enthusiasm of many of these returned students and volunteers have not been fully utilized in promoting a development education movement. Usually upon return there is some sharing of experiences with a local school or community group but generally there is no institutional mechanism locally to support any development education efforts they might wish to undertake. Currently several efforts are underway to improve communication among returned students and volunteers by forming alumni associations. This could lead to some development education activities that would draw upon their first-hand experiences, knowledge and skills.

A few of the privately supported programs have undertaken education programs in local schools and communities as a part of promoting their exchange or volunteer programs. With a couple notable exceptions, however, these have not dealt with global problems or development or justice issues. They are rather predominantly cross-cultural in focus, with an obvious tendency to shy away from controversial international economic and political issues. The Peace Corps has also initiated a Partnership Program that will link schools and communities in the U.S. with the ongoing work of volunteers in the field. This should provide an opportunity not only for more cross-cultural contact, but for more local U.S. involvement with on-the-ground development issues.

Churches and Related Organizations

In 1974, the Aspen Interreligious Consultation on Global Justice and Development brought together representatives of over 100 U.S. religious groups. This gathering helped to focus the religious community in the U.S. on the importance of constituency education about hunger and development. Since that time a number of Protestant denominations (for example the Lutherans, Methodists and Presbyterians) have developed hunger education programs as a first step in a development education effort. More sophisticated materials--study guides, films and a steady stream of new books--have rolled off the presses in recent years, many of which are used in small study groups organized at the local church level.

The Catholic Church in the U.S. has also produced some materials on hunger and justice issues. But, as with the Protestants, individual parish churches have much freedom to pick-and-choose their emphasis. While the current Pope has highlighted the importance of many social justice issues, the message has not generally been echoed in parish churches.

As contrasted to the institutional church, Christian groups outside the formal Protestant and Catholic hierarchies such as Bread for the World and its Education Fund, the Center of Concern (a Jesuit-based research and education organization) and Evangelicals for Social Action, to name a few, have been much more active in producing materials and sponsoring activities that deal explicitly with justice issues such as the systematic inequities that plague the social, economic and political orders and the linkages between local and global situations. They have also raised important questions about the affluent "life-style" of American Christians. Together these "outside" groups have challenged the American Christian community to deal with these issues in a much more personal and fundamental way.

Thus, while the Christian churches clearly have a basis for teaching about justice and development, their focus has been more often on charity than on justice and solidarity with the poor. There are few explicit policies regarding development education, though some national church leaders have taken public positions on a variety of development issues, e.g., hunger, refugees, human rights, apartheid, etc. While the stimulus for many hunger programs has come from local congregations, these groups have

not always gotten the support they need from "the top" to undertake longer-term education programs.

Within religious schools (both Catholic and Protestant) strides have been made, particularly in producing materials that can be integrated into on-going curricula. The National Catholic Education Association has produced substantial materials on "Education for Peace and Justice" as has the Bread for the World Education Fund. The Education Fund has also worked closely with universities as part of their Decade of Commitment for World Hunger.

It is also important to note that the links Christian churches have to the developing world through their mission programs and relief/development agencies have contributed to the development education of church members. Returning missionaries have educated many congregations about the development problems around the world, though they may not have linked these concerns to social or political actions on behalf of justice or to the responsibilities of local parishioners beyond that of charitable contributions. Catholic religious congregations such as Maryknoll, Jesuits and others have been more active in developing education programs in the U.S. related to their overseas missions.

In addition, the field-oriented relief and development agencies of the churches have, often inadvertently, played a role in educating Americans about development and about people in developing countries. As a part of their fundraising campaigns, many of these agencies have depicted the faces of starving children who need immediate "relief". While a number of the agencies are now engaged in longer-term development efforts, their supporters still "give" to the image of the hungry child and thus many have not learned much about the development process or global justice.

Private and Voluntary (Field-Oriented) Organizations

There are more than 150 U.S. private and voluntary organizations (PVOs) that provide relief and/or technical assistance of one sort or another to people in developing countries. Some of these field-oriented agencies have seriously entered the arena of development education in the U.S., building on their traditional linkages to vast segments

of the American public. For most, however, fundraising comes first. Development education is an "afterthought" and even then is often a guise for raising additional funds.

The substantive focus of these programs carried out by PVOs varies. Few deal directly with North/South or justice issues. Some focus on the immediate problems of people in developing countries and tangentially link their agencies' work to the solution of these problems. Some promote the work of their own agency either through project case studies from a developing country (which may also promote a more informed perspective on the broad issues of development) or through direct fundraising appeals, particularly through the media, by portraying the hungry and hopeless child in need of relief aid. Unfortunately, the latter approach, widespread as it is in the media, has significantly shaped American images of the needs and potential of people in developing countries.

The constituency education programs of Church World Service (CROP) and OXFAM-America are examples of development education programs undertaken by PVOs largely separated from their fundraising efforts. CWS, for example, has a specific mandate to "inform and sensitize Americans in support of self-development of people around the world." To this end it is undertaking a long-term program of constituency education involving research, experimentation with global education models, production of materials, establishment of a resource center and formation of regional networks of persons and organizations committed to education for global justice.

OXFAM has initiated press tours for journalists to selected Third World countries and study tours for private citizens. It has also sponsored a series of regional conferences on development issues and produced printed and audio-visual materials for use by community groups. In addition, its annual Thanksgiving Feast for World Hunger, while primarily a fundraising effort, does provide an opportunity for organizing educational activities about development in local churches, community groups, etc.

The Future for Development Education -- Next Steps

Development education in the U.S. has gradually "come of age" primarily because of external events that have forced Americans to recognize their ignorance and insensitivity to important issues and problems relating to global development.

While consensus on the meaning of the term "development education"--let alone its substance or strategies --is unlikely, it is clear that there are some important efforts being made, particularly at the local level, to improve understanding of a variety of global issues and of the important relationships between these issues, the developing countries and the United States. For these efforts to bear more fruit in the future, however, several steps should be considered by those individuals and organizations involved in development education as follows:

- Develop a better network of communication among organizations seeking to inform and involve Americans on development issues so that more materials could be shared, community events could promote cooperation, lobbying efforts could be coordinated, etc.

- Establish a national, annual development education "event" by beginning at the regional level and over a period of years moving to a national level. Such an event (like Canada's "10 Days for Development") could galvanize the energies of hundreds of local groups for a specific time period and focus public (and media) attention on development issues.

- Promote statewide development (or global) education councils that would provide a forum for sharing information about local resources and a point for coordinating the statewide activities of various national organizations.

- Focus attention on the linkages between poverty and development abroad and in the U.S. to help Americans understand their role and responsibility in the process of development not only "over there," but also at home.

- Design educational programs which engage Americans more directly with the poor and oppressed at home or in the developing countries, so that they may learn from them.

The development education movement in the U.S. is evolving slowly. It is a gradual process involving the development and cultivation of some shared perceptions of common global problems and of their best solutions. It needs, in the future, to become as Paulo Freire has said about education in general, "the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world."

DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

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HOW TO GET UNICEF DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION MATERIALS

Almost all development education materials can be obtained from any of the 31 National Committees for UNICEF. The address for the United States Committee for UNICEF is: 331 East 38th Street, New York, New York 10016.

"Development Education Papers" are free on request. Other materials can be forwarded to you at prices indicated.

GAMES

The World Card Game (ages 7-12) $3.00
A four-colour 32-card game dealing with the issues industrial/agrarian societies, poor/rich people, modern/traditional ways, and interdependence. English or French.

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Forty indigenous games played with sticks, pebbles or just some space to run. Eight-by-ten inch photos (b/w) illustrate activities important and familiar to children of developing nations. English.

DISPLAY MATERIAL

Arab Women at Work $8.00
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Discussion Leader Guides for;

- Journey for Survival
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- Strategy for Growth
- It's the Same World
- A Tough Place to Play

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No. 1 - Shishir of Bangladesh
No. 2 - Young in India
No. 3 - Kwadwo of Ghana
No. 4 - Village Technology
No. 5 - With Shiromi in Sri Lanka
No. 6 - An Approach to Peace Education
$2.50. Teacher's notes, classroom activities, fact sheets, background articles.
No. 7 - With Antonio in Guatemala
No. 8 - Anadia from Sudan
Also includes 6 8x10 inch b/w display photos.
No. 9 - The Global Story of Disabilities
15-slide series. 6 b/w display photos. Co-produced with Rehabilitation International.
No. 10-Precious Junk: the Ingenious Use of Scrap in the Sahel

DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION PAPERS SERIES

Papers have been presented on: Indigenous Games for Development Education; Within We Are All Alike But Do We Realize It?; Education, Development and the Search for Human Liberation; Development Education and Japan; Does It Work? Evaluation Guidelines for Development Education Teachers; Development Education in the United States; Development Education: Suggestions for Content and Strategies; Play, Development Education and Games; Development Education: NGO Priorities for the Eighties; the World Food Problem: Case Study of Home Economics Teaching Unit; Development Education in New Zealand; Teaching Global Issues through Mathematics; Development Education and Multi-Ethnic Education: Some Tensions.

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